WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method of retrieving information from one or more information sources in a search space, said method comprising:

providing central program code at a central computer; said central program code being adapted for maintaining a central database of data records, for accessing information from said information sources, and for comparing said data records with said information from said information sources;

recognizing communication between said central program code and remote program code at each of a plurality of remote terminals; said remote program code being adapted for monitoring network activity at each of said plurality of remote terminals, for collecting monitored data related to said network activity and to each of said information sources accessed by any of said plurality of remote terminals, and for transmitting said monitored data to said central program code;

aggregating, at said central computer, said monitored data transmitted from said remote program code at all of said plurality of remote terminals and supplementing said data records in accordance with said monitored data;

responsive to a request for information from one of said plurality of remote terminals, identifying candidate response information from said information sources by employing said central program code at said central computer;

comparing said data records with said request and with said candidate response information by employing said central program code at said central computer; and

as a result of said identifying and said comparing, transmitting, to said remote program code at said one of said plurality of remote terminals, data concerning one or more of said information sources which contain information relevant to said request.

2.   A central data aggregation system for accumulation of data related to one or more information sources in a search space, said system comprising:

3   remote program code at a plurality of remote terminals; said remote program code
4   being adapted for monitoring network activity at each of said plurality of remote
5   terminals, for collecting monitored data related to said network activity and to each of
6   said information sources accessed by any of said plurality of remote terminals, and
7   for transmitting said monitored data; and

8   a central computer having central program code capable of communicating with said
9   remote program code and receiving said monitored data transmitted from said remote
10   program code at all of said plurality of remote terminals; said central program code
11   being adapted for maintaining a central database of data records and for accessing
12   information from said information sources;

13   wherein said central database comprises at least one data record relating to each of
14   said information sources accessed by at least one of said plurality of remote terminals,
15   and wherein said central computer has additional program code adapted for
16   aggregating said monitored data transmitted from said program code at all of said
17   plurality of remote terminals and for supplementing said data records in accordance
18   with said monitored data.

1   3.   A distributed monitoring system for collection and accumulation of data related to
2   one or more information sources in a search space, said system comprising:

3   a central computer having central program code adapted for maintaining a central
4   database of data records related to said information sources; and

5   remote program code capable of communicating with said central program code and
6   adapted for monitoring network activity at each of a plurality of remote terminals, for
7   collecting monitored data related to said network activity and to each of said
8   information sources accessed by any of said plurality of remote terminals, and for
9   transmitting said monitored data to said central program code;

10   wherein said central computer has additional program code adapted for
11   supplementing said data records in accordance with said monitored data.

-51-

1   4.   A method of retrieving information from one or more information sources in a search

2   space, said method comprising:

3   accumulating monitored data related to each of said information sources accessed by

4   any of a plurality of remote terminals;

5   transmitting said monitored data from each of said plurality of remote terminals to a

6   central computer;

7   aggregating, at said central computer, said monitored data transmitted by all of said

8   plurality of remote terminals;

9   responsive to a request for information, accessing information from said information

10   sources and comparing said monitored data with said request and with said

11   information from said information sources; and

12   as a result of said accessing and said comparing, identifying one or more of said

13   information sources which contain information relevant to the request.

1   5.   A method of retrieving information from one or more information sources in a search

2   space, said method comprising:

3   accumulating monitored data related to each of said information sources accessed by

4   any of a plurality of remote terminals;

5   aggregating said monitored data at a central computer;

6   responsive to a request for information, comparing said monitored data with said

7   request and with information from said information sources; and

8   identifying one or more of said information sources in accordance with said

9   comparing.

1   6.   An open recommendation system for retrieval of information from one or more

2   information sources in a search space, said system comprising:

3   a distributed monitoring system adapted to collect monitored data related to said

4   information sources; and

5   a central data aggregation system adapted to receive said monitored data from said

6   distributed monitoring system and to store said monitored data at a central computer;

7 wherein said open recommendation, in response to a request for information, compares said

8 monitored data related to said information sources with said request and then recommends

9 information sources for which said monitored data is similar to said request.